53: Tokarev and Gurvich E-4 (no date) 1964
RV2 Yakut RV2

skillfully made; the wooden crockery was usually decorated with carving, while the birchbark objects were decorated with horsehair designs. 322

Fur-dressing and tanning were very common. The materials were made into a great variety of different things—clothing, footwear, and headgear; carpets, underlays (usually made of horse- or cow-hide, often sewn together from pieces into a checkered mosaic), blankets (from horseskin); the leather vessels were made in a variety of sizes, ranging from the enormous simiir' for kumys down to the tiny pail or tursuk; various parts of saddles, straps, nooses and so on. The actual working of the leather and fur was very primitive—the hide was smoked (in ancient times and even in the 17th century this was done in earth stoves), crumpled, smeared with oil or cream, and there was no true tanning. The manufacture of reindeer suede was evidently learnt from the Evenks and the Evens. The Yakuts themselves did not make any cloth, either from animal wool or vegetable fiber—and only used what was imported. They did not know about spinning, nor how to roll felt. On the other hand, horsehair was widely employed; it was used for the ornamentation of birchbark and other objects, particularly for braiding different kinds of lassoes, cord, laces and nets, loops, fans to keep flies away, stuffing pillows for saddles and so on. The Yakuts also wove horsehair for decorative purposes. The individual hairs were twisted into a thread by hand on a bare knee, without using a spindle. 281 286 283 439 531

Blacksmithery was the only trade among the Yakuts which had long acquired commercial importance, although normally it was not a separate trade from agriculture. In the 17th century the Russians found it to be highly developed among the Yakuts. The iron was obtained from marsh ore, of which there was a great deal, particularly on the Vilyuy. The ore was mined along the rivers Botoma, Amga, Sola and others. It was first smelted in primitive blast furnaces. But at the beginning of the 20th century the Yakut smiths were already working with imported iron. They forged it into a variety of implements and utensils, weapons and so on. Apart from iron, the Yakut smiths worked low-grade silver, which in the 19th and 20th centuries was partly obtainable by melting down Russian coins. This silver was made into various ornaments, linings for belts, whips, horse harnessing. The equipment used in the smithies was fairly unsophisticated—furnaces worked with bellows (portable), anvils, hammer and tongs. 326 [316]

The fact that they engaged in ceramics singles out the Yakuts from the people around them. They evidently retained pottery as a relic of the Neolithic stage. Nevertheless, it was very primitive. To the dark, viscous clay they used to add powder ground from old fired pots and then mold the clay mixture diluted with water into the walls of the pot with their hands (without a wheel), using a stone to smooth them out (on the inside) and a trowel (on the outside). The pots were fired in the hearth. The pottery varied in size and the shapes and designs were crude. In the last few decades, Yakut ceramics have been replaced by Russian ones. 323

Mammoth-ivory carving (Yakutiya is rich in mammoth skeletons), which was probably not begun before the 19th century, was not a common trade, although it was an interesting one. The ivory was carved into a variety of trinkets and small boxes. 321

These were the main types of production among the Yakuts prior to the Revolution. As a whole, the Yakut economy remained at a fairly low level of development, and by and large remained a subsistence economy. Nevertheless, the sale of homemade products acquired ever-greater importance towards the end of the 19th century. This was mainly the case 433 443